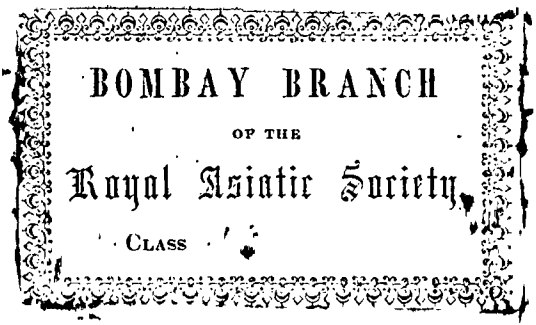
NOT TO BE ISSUED
OUT OF THE LIBRARY.

00052629



Digitized with financial assistance from
Government of Maharashtra
on 30 January, 2020

THE

VICTORIES OF LOVE.

52629
cc

BY

COVENTRY PATMORE.

"Omnia quæ in cœlis sunt in terris terrestri modo; omnia quæ in terris sunt in cœlis cœlesti modo."

HERMES TRISMEGISTUS.

London and Cambridge:
MACMILLAN AND CO.
1863.

The right of Translation is reserved.

00052629

CONTENTS.

THE VICTORIES OF LOVE.

		PAGE
I.	FELIX TO HONORIA	7
II.	JANE TO HER MOTHER	12
III.	JANE TO MRS. GRAHAM	18
IV.	JANE TO FREDERICK	22
V.	JANE TO FREDERICK	29
VI.	JANE TO FREDERICK	37
VII.	LADY CLITHEROE TO MRS. GRAHAM	45
VIII.	MARY CHURCHILL TO THE DEAN	52
IX.	LADY CLITHEROE TO EMILY GRAHAM	57
X.	THE WEDDING SERMON	65
XI.	FELIX TO HONORIA	90

THE VICTORIES OF LOVE.

I.

FELIX TO HONORIA.

LET me, Beloved, while gratitude
Is garrulous with coming good,
Or ere the tongue of happiness
Be silenced by your soft caress,
Relate how, musing here of you,
The clouds, the intermediate blue,
The air that rings with larks, the grave
And distant rumour of the wave,
The solitary sailing skiff,
The gusty corn-field on the cliff,
The corn-flower by the crumbling ledge,
Or, far down at the shingle's edge,

The sighing sea's recurrent crest
Breaking, resigned to its unrest,
All whisper, to my home-sick thought,
Of charms in you till now uncaught,
Or only caught as dreams, to die
Ere they were own'd by memory.
  High and ingenious Decree
Of joy-devising Deity!
You whose ambition only is
The assurance that you make my bliss,
Hence my first debt of love to show
That you, past shewing, indeed do so,
Trust me the world, the firmament,
With diverse-natured worlds besprent,
Were rear'd in no mere undivine
Boast of omnipotent design,
The lion differing from the snake
But for the trick of difference sake,
And comets darting to and fro
Because in circles planets go;
But rather that sole love might be
Refresh'd throughout eternity

In one sweet faith, for ever strange,
Mirror'd by circumstantial change.
For, more and more, do I perceive
That everything is relative
To you, and that there's not a star,
Nor nothing in't, so strange or far,
But, if 'twere scann'd, 'twould chiefly mean
Somewhat, till then, in you unseen,
Something to make the bondage strait
Of you and me more intimate,
Some novel opportunity
Of nuptials in a new degree.
  But, oh, with what a novel force
Your best-conn'd beauties, by remorse
Of absence, touch ! and, in my heart,
How bleeds afresh the youthful smart
Of passion fond, despairing still
To utter infinite goodwill
By worthy service ! Yet I know
That love is all that love can owe,
And this to offer is no less
Of worth, in kind speech or caress,

Than if my life-blood I should give.
For good is God's prerogative,
And Love's deed is but to prepare
The flatter'd, dear Beloved to dare
Acceptance of His gifts. When first
On me your happy beauty burst,
Honoria, verily it seem'd
That naught beyond you could be dream'd
Of beauty and of heaven's delight.
Zeal of an unknown infinite
Yet bade me ever wish you more
Beatified than ere before.
Angelical were your replies
To my prophetic flatteries;
And sweet was the compulsion strong
That drew me in the course along
Of heaven's increasing bright allure,
With provocations fresh of your
Victorious capacity.
Whither may love, so fledged, not fly?
Did not mere Earth hold fast the string
Of this celestial soaring thing,

So measure and make sensitive,
And still, to the nerves, nice notice give
Of each minutest increment
Of such interminable ascent,
The heart would lose all count, and beat
Unconscious of a height so sweet,
And the spirit-pursuing senses strain
Their steps on the starry track in vain!
But, reading now the note just come,
With news of you, the babes, and home,
I think, and say, "To-morrow eve
With kisses me will she receive;"
And, thinking, for extreme delight
Of love's extremes, I laugh outright.

II.

JANE TO HER MOTHER.

THANK Heaven, the burthens on the heart
Are not half known till they depart!
Although I pray'd, for many a year,
To love with love which casts out fear,
My Frederick's kindness frighten'd me,
And heaven seem'd less far off than he;
And in my fancy I would trace
A lady with an angel's face,
And laugh that made devotion debt,
Till sick with envy and regret,
And wicked grief that God should e'er
Make women, and not make them fair.
That he might love me more because
Another in his memory was,

And that my indigence might be
To him what Baby's was to me,
And that a man should "feel all charms
In the mere folding of fond arms,"
(When Frederick says a thing, you know,
You are so sure it must be so,
'Tis almost dreadful), who could have thought?
But God's wise way is to give nought
To all our prayers, till we are tired,
And when, indeed, the change desired
Comes, lest we give ourselves the praise,
It comes by Providence, not Grace;
And mostly our thanks for granted prayers
Are groans at unexpected cares.
First Baby went to heaven, you know,
And, five weeks after, Grace went, too.
Then he became more talkative,
And, stooping to my heart, would give
Signs of his love, which pleased me more
Than all the proofs he gave before;
And, in that time of our great grief,
We talk'd religion for relief;

For, Mother, though we seldom name
Religion, we now think the same!
Oh, what a bar is thus removed
To loving and to being loved!
For no agreement really is
In anything when none's in this.
Why, once, if dear, dear Frederick press'd
His Wife against his hearty breast,
The interior difference seem'd to tear
My own, until I could not bear
The trouble. 'Twas a dreadful strife,
And shew'd, indeed, that faith is life.
He never felt this. If he did,
I'm sure it could not have been hid;
For wives, I need not say to you,
Can feel just what their husbands do,
Without a word or look; but then
It is not so, you know, with men.
Thenceforward, many a Scripture text
Help'd me, which had, till then, perplex'd.
Oh, what a wondrous word seem'd this:
He is my head, as Christ is his!

None, surely, could have dared to see
In marriage such a dignity
For man, and for his wife, still less,
Such happy, happy lowliness,
Had God himself not made it plain!
This revelation lays the rein—
If I may speak so—on the neck
Of a wife's love, takes thence the check
Of conscience, and forbids to doubt
Its measure is to be without
All measure, and a right excess
Is here her rule of godliness.
I took him not for love but fright;
He did but ask a dreadful right.
In this was love, that he loved me
The first, who was mere poverty.
All that I know of love he taught;
And love is all I know of aught.
My merit is so small by his,
That my demerit is my bliss.
Yet, for the sake of only love,
And that his gift, does he approve

His wife entirely, as the Lord
The Church his Bride, whom thus the Word
Calls Black but Comely, Precious, Sweet,
Fair, Pleasant, Holy, yea, Complete,
When, really, she was no such thing!
But God knew well what He could bring
From nought, and He, her beauty's cause,
Saw it, and praised it, ere it was.
So did, so does my lord, my friend,
On whom for all things I depend;
Whose I am wholly, rather who
I am, so am in all things new;
My Love, my Life, my Reverence, yes,
And, in some sort, my Righteousness!
For wisdom does in him so shine
My conscience seems more his than mine.
My life is hid with him in Christ,
Never thencefrom to be enticed;
And in his strength have I such rest
As when the baby on my breast
Finds what it knows not how to seek,
And, very happy, very weak,

Lies, only knowing all is well,
Pillow'd on kindness palpable.
Oh, this unspeakable delight
Of owing a debt that's infinite!
And yet, if possible, more sweet
The folly, vanity, conceit,
Astonishment and mystery,
That he delights no less in me!

III.

JANE TO MRS. GRAHAM.

DEAR Mother, I can surely tell,
Now, that I never shall get well.
Besides the warning in my mind,
All suddenly are grown so kind.
Fred stopp'd the Doctor, yesterday,
Downstairs, and, when he went away,
Came smiling back, and sat with me,
Pale, and conversing cheerfully
About the Spring, and how my cough,
In finer weather, would leave off.
I saw it all, and told him plain
I felt no hope of Spring again.
Then he, after a word of jest,
Burst into tears upon my breast,

And own'd, when he could speak, he knew
There was a little danger, too.
This made me very weak and ill,
And while, last night, I lay quite still,
And, as he fancied, in the deep
Exhausted rest of my short sleep,
I heard, or dream'd I heard him pray:
"Oh, Father, take her not away!
"Let not life's dear assurance lapse
"Into death's agonized 'Perhaps,'
"A hope without Thy sanction, where
"Less than assurance is despair!
"Give me some sign, if go she must,
"That death's not worse than dust to dust,
"Not heaven on whose oblivious shore
"Joy I may have, but her no more!
"The bitterest cross, it seems to me,
"Of all is infidelity;
"And so, if I may choose, I'll miss
"The kind of heaven which comes to this!
"If doom'd, indeed, this fever ceased,
"To die out wholly, like a beast,

"Forgetting all life's ill success
"In dark and peaceful nothingness,
"I could but say, Thy will be done;
"For, dying thus, I were but one
"Of seed innumerable which ne'er
"In all the worlds shall bloom or bear.
"I've put life past to so poor use
"Well may'st Thou life to come refuse,
"And justice, which the spirit contents,
"Shall still in me all vain laments;
"Nay, pleased, I will, while yet I live,
"Think Thou my forfeit joy may'st give
"To some fresh life, else unelect,
"And heaven not feel my poor defect!
"Only let not Thy method be
"To make that life, and call it me;
"Still less to sever mine in twain,
"And tell each half to live again,
"And count itself the whole! To die,
"Is it love's disintegrity?
"Answer me, 'No,' and I, with grace,
"Will life's brief desolation face,

"My ways, as native to the clime,
"Adjusting to the wintry time,
"Ev'n with a patient cheer thereof—"
He started up, hearing me cough.
Oh, Mother, now my last doubt's gone!
He likes me *more* than Mrs. Vaughan;
And death, which takes me from his side,
Shews me, in very deed, his bride!

IV.

JANE TO FREDERICK.

I LEAVE this, Dear, for you to read,
For strength and hope, when I am dead.
When Grace died, I was so perplex'd,
I could not find one helpful text;
And when, a little while before,
I saw her sobbing on the floor,
Because I told her that in heaven
She would be as the angels even,
And would not want her doll, 'tis true
A horrible fear within me grew,
That, since the preciousness of love
Went thus for nothing, mine might prove
To be no more, and heaven's bliss
Some dreadful good which is not this.

But being about to die makes clear
Many dark things. I have no fear,
Now, that my love, my grief, my joy
Is but a passion for a toy.
I cannot speak at all, I find,
The shining something in my mind
That shews so much that, if I took
My thoughts all down, 'twould make a book.
God's Word, which lately seem'd above
The simpleness of human love,
To my death-sharpen'd hearing tells
Of little or of nothing else;
And many thoughts I hoped were true,
When first they came, like songs, from you,
Now rise with witness past the reach
Of doubt, and I to you can teach,
As if with felt authority
And as things seen, what you taught me.
Yet how? I have no words but those
Which every one already knows:
As, "No man hath at any time
"Seen God, but 'tis the love of Him

"Made perfect, and He dwells in us,
"If we each other love." Or thus,
"My goodness misseth in extent
"Of Thee, Lord! In the excellent
"I know Thee; and the Saints on Earth
"Make all my love and holy mirth."
And further, "Inasmuch as ye
"Did it to one of these, to Me
"Ye did it, though ye nothing thought
"Nor knew of Me, in that ye wrought."
Frederick, the love of you and me
Is love to God and charity
To all men. Oh, I love you so,
I love all other, friend and foe,
And wish, perforce, all kinds of good
To all in need and neighbourhood!
What shall I dread? Will God undo
This bond, which is all others too?
And when I meet you will you say
To my reclaiming looks, "Away!
"A dearer love my bosom warms
"With higher rights and holier charms.

"The children, whom thou here may'st see,
"Neighbours that mingle thee and me,
"And gaily on impartial lyres
"Renounce the foolish filial fires
"They felt, with 'Praise to God on high,
"'Goodwill to all else equally;'
"The trials, duties, service, tears;
"The many fond, confiding years
"Of nearness sweet with thee apart;
"The joy of body, mind, and heart;
"The love that grew a reckless growth,
"Unmindful that the marriage-oath
"To love in an eternal style
"Meant—only for a little while:
"Sever'd are now those bonds earth-wrought;
"All love, not new, stands here for nought!"
Why, it seems almost wicked, Dear,
Even to fancy such a fear!
Are we not "heirs," as man and wife,
"Together of eternal life?"
Was Paradise e'er meant to fade,
To make which marriage first was made?

Neither beneath him nor above
Could man in Eden find his Love;
Yet with him in the garden walk'd
His God, and with him mildly talk'd!
Shall the humble preference offend
In heaven, which God did there commend?
Are "honourable and undefiled"
The names of aught from heaven exiled?
And are we not forbid to grieve
As without hope? Does God deceive,
And call that hope which is despair,
Namely, the heaven we should not share!
Image and glory of the man,
As he of God, is woman. Can
This holy, sweet proportion die
Into a dull equality?
Are we not one flesh, yea, so far
More than the babe and mother are,
That sons are bid mothers to leave
And to their wives alone to cleave,
"For *they* two are one flesh?" But 'tis
In the flesh we rise. Our union is,

You know 'tis said, "'great mystery."
Great mockery, it appears to me;
Poor image of the spousal bond
Of Christ and Church, if loosed beyond
This life!—'Gainst which, and much more yet,
There's not a single word to set.
The speech to the scoffing Sadducee
Is not in point to you and me;
For how could Christ have taught such clods
That Cæsar's things are also God's?
The sort of Wife the Law could make
Might well be "hated" for Love's sake,
And left, like money, land, or house;
For out of Christ is no true spouse.
I used to think it strange of Him
To make love's after-life so dim,
Or only clear by inference:
But God trusts much to common sense,
And only tells us what, without
His Word, we could not have found out.
On fleshly tables of the heart
He penn'd truth's feeling counterpart

In hopes that come to all: so, Dear,
Trust these, and be of happy cheer,
Nor think that he who has loved well
Is of all men most miserable.

There's much more yet I want to say,
But cannot now. You know my way
Of feeling strong from twelve till two
After my wine. I'll write to you
Daily some words, which you shall have
To break the silence of the grave.

V.

JANE TO FREDERICK.

YOU think, perhaps, "Ah, could she know,
How much I loved her!" Dear, I do!
And you will say, "Of this new awe
"Of heart which makes her fancies law,
"These watchful duties of despair,
"She does not dream, she cannot care!"
Frederick, you see how false that is,
Or how could I have written this?
And, should it ever cross your mind
That, now and then, you were unkind,
You never, never were at all!
Remember that! 'Tis natural
For such as Mr. Vaughan to come,
From a morning's useful pastime, home,

And greet, with such a courteous zest,
His handsome wife, still newly dress'd,
As if the Bird of Paradise
Should daily change her plumage thrice.
He's always well, she's always gay.
Of course! But he who toils all day,
And comes home hungry, tired, or cold,
And feels 'twould do him good to scold
His wife a little, let him trust
Her love, and boldly be unjust,
Till sooth'd in mind by meat and rest?
If, after that, she's well caress'd,
And told how good she is, to bear
His humour, fortune makes it fair.
Women like men to be like men;
That is, at least, just now and then.
Thus, I have nothing to forgive,
But those first years, (how could I live!)
When, though I really did behave
So stupidly, you never gave
One unkind word or look at all:
As if I was some animal

You pitied! Now, in later life,
You used me like a real Wife.
You feel, Dear, in your present mood,
Your Wife, since she was kind and good,
A child of God, a living soul,
Was not so different, on the whole,
From Her who had a little more
Of God's best gifts: but, oh, be sure,
My dear, dear Love, to take no blame
Because you could not feel the same
Towards me, living, as when dead.
A starving man must needs think bread
So sweet! and, only at their rise
And setting, blessings, to the eyes,
Like the sun's course, grow visible.
If you are sad, remember well,
Against delusions of despair,
That memory sees things as they were,
And not as they were misenjoy'd,
And would be still, if ought destroy'd
The glory of their hopelessness:
So that, in truth, you had me less

In days when necessary zeal
For my perfection made you feel
My faults the most, than now your love
Forgets but where it can approve.
You gain by loss, if that seem'd small
Possess'd, which, being gone, turns all
Surviving good to vanity.
Oh, Fred, this makes it sweet to die!
Say to yourself: "'Tis comfort yet
"I made her that which I regret;
"And parting might have come to pass
"In a worse season; as it was,
"Love an eternal temper took,
"Dipp'd, glowing, in Death's icy brook!"
Or say, "On her poor, feeble head
"This might have fallen: 'tis mine instead!
"And so great evil sets me free
"Henceforward from calamity.
"And, in her little children, too,
"How much for her I yet can do!"
And grieve not for these orphans even;

For central to the love of Heaven
Is each child as each star to space.
This truth my dying love has grace
To trust with a so sure content,
I fear I seem indifferent.
  You must not think a child's small heart
Cold, because it and grief soon part.
Fanny will keep them all away,
And you'll not hear them laugh and play,
Until the funeral's over. Then
I hope you'll be yourself again,
And glad, with all your soul to find
How God thus to the sharpest wind
Suits the shorn lambs. Instruct them,
    Dear,
For my sake, in His love and fear.
Show how, until their journey's done,
Not to be weary they must run ;
And warn them 'gainst the blasphemy
That Heaven makes sin necessity.
No fig-leaves hide that shame from God
Which kills love's root within the sod !

Strive not to dissipate your grief
By any lightness. True relief
Of sorrow is by sorrow brought.
And yet, for sorrow's sake, you ought
To grieve with measure. Do not spend
So good a power to no good end!
Would you, indeed, have memory stay
In the heart, lock up and put away
Relics and likenesses and all
Musings, which waste what they recal.
True comfort, and the only thing
To soothe without diminishing
A prized regret, is to match here,
By a strict life, God's love severe.
Yet, after all, by nature's course,
Feeling must lose its edge and force.
Again you'll reach the desert tracts
Where only sin or duty acts.
But, if love always lit our path,
Where were the trial of our faith?
Oh, should the mournful honeymoon
Of death be over strangely soon,

And life-long resolutions, made
In grievous haste, as quickly fade,
Seeming the truth of grief to mock,
Think, Dearest, 'tis not by the clock
That sorrow goes! A month of tears
Is more than many, many years
Of common time. Shun, if you can,
However, any passionate plan,
Grieve with the heart; let not the head
Grieve on, when grief of heart is dead;
For all the powers of life defy
A superstitious constancy.
The only bond I hold you to
Is that which nothing can undo.
A man is not a young man twice;
And if, of his young years, he lies
A faithful score in one wife's breast,
She need not mind who has the rest.
In this do what you will, dear Love,
And feel quite sure that I approve.
And, should it chance as it may be,
Give her my wedding-ring from me;

And never dream that you can err
T'wards me by being good to her;
Nor let remorseful thoughts destroy
In you the kindly flowering joy
And pleasure of the natural life.
  But don't forget your fond, dead Wife.
And, Frederick, should you ever be
Tempted to think your love of me
All fancy, since it drew its breath
So much more sweetly after death,
Remember that I never did
A single thing you once forbid;
All poor folks loved me; and, at the end,
Even Mrs. Vaughan wrote "Dearest Friend!'

VI.

JANE TO FREDERICK.

FROM John his secret I have drawn :
He is in love with sweet Miss Vaughan.
I see, too, that her parents know,
And are content to have it so.
By Uncle's Will, our Boy will be
Rich, as they know ; and Emily,
Sweet Baby, will of course approve
The first fine Youth they let make love.
I never could get courage, Dear,
To tell you this ; it was too near
My heart. You loved her Mother so !
(And I love all things loved by you !)

Now, in your children, you will wed!
And John seems *so* much comforted,
(Like Isaac when *his* mother died,
And fair Rebekah was his bride,)
By his new hope, for losing me!
And all this happiness, you see,
Somehow or other, should I try
To talk to you, would make me cry.
I hope you'll tell dear Mrs. Vaughan
How much you loved me, when I'm gone!
  And this reminds me how, last night,
I fell asleep in strange delight,
And dream'd I was in heaven—mere dreams,
Yet, to my sickly thought, it seems
To have been true vision! Things not true,
As once you taught me, often do
To make true things conceivable;
So what I saw I'll try to tell.
  Imaged in heaven's crystal floor,
I saw myself, myself no more.
In such a shape henceforth I dwelt
That love me most of all I felt

You must! Though others, to my view,
Were lovelier, yet the love of you
I found was all the loveliness
Which there 'twas given you to possess
Or wish for. So, besides the glow
Of God, the same on every brow,
Like me, the angelic women were
Each with a separate beauty fair,
Which was a lovely mystery
To all, but one who had the key.
Our marriage-robes, that round us shook,
Were love on which the eyes could look,
On which, too, from seven bows in heaven,
Whereof the hues were seven times seven,
And always shifting, fell such light
As made the expressions infinite
In those bright veils; for brief above,
As here, was every joy of love.
A Lady came and gazed on me,
And laugh'd, and sang, "Glad will he be!"
And one, "Love, here at last achieved,
"Not only is, but is perceived!"

And one, who beckon'd me apart,
Press'd me against her angel's heart,
And said, 'Tis mine to guard his Wife
" From strangeness till he comes to life."
Most like to earth's was heaven's good;
Most different was the gratitude!
I saw the rose and felt the breeze,
And laugh'd and sang for bliss of these;
And every thing on every part
Was, oh, such pleasure in the heart!
The nearness of the Lord I knew
By mild recurrent glows that grew
Within the breast, and died away,
And made the change of night and day.
But this was wonderful, that, when
The Day was fullest, all the men
Seem'd women, and the women were
Beautiful infants, whom with care
They kept from noon's o'erwhelming might,
Singing them stories of the Light,
The burthen of the lullaby
Being, " All praise to God on high,

" Who makes the Babes so soft and sweet."
Sequester'd from the heavenly heat
And splendours of the fields of love,
The Lady shew'd me then a grove.
Breathlessly still was part, and part
Was breathing with an easy heart ;
And there below, in lamb-like game,
Were virgins, all so much the same,
That each was all. A youth drew nigh,
And on them gazed with dreaming eye,
And would have pass'd, but that a maid,
Clapping her hands above her, said,
" My time is now !" and laughing ran
After the dull and strange young man,
And bade him stop and look at her.
And so he call'd her lovelier
Than any else, only because
She only then before him was.
And, while they stood and gazed, a change
Was seen in both, diversely strange :
The youth was ever more and more
That good which he had been before ;

But the glad maiden grew and grew
Such that the rest no longer knew
Their sister, who was now to sight
The young man's self, yet opposite,
As the outer rainbow is the first,
But weaker, and the hues reversed.
And whereas, in the abandon'd grove,
The virgin round the Central Love
Had blindly circled in her play,
Now danced she round her partner's way
And, as the earth the moon's, so he
Had the responsibility
Of her diviner motion. "Lo,"
He sang, and the heavens began to glow,
"The pride of personality,
"Seeking its highest, aspires to die,
"And in unspeakably profound
"Humiliation Love is crown'd!
"And from his exaltation still
"Into his ocean of good-will
"He curiously casts the lead
"To find strange depths of lowlihead."

To one same tune, but higher, "Bold,"
The maiden sang, "is Love! For cold
"On Earth are blushes, and for shame
"Of such an ineffectual flame
"As ill consumes the sacrifice!"
By the Angel led, in such sweet wise,
There did my happy hearing greet
That which she bade me not repeat.
"Truth levell'd to the world's low eye,
"In heaven," said she, "appears a lie;
"And tales of the seraphic sphere
"Were scandals in the earth's false ear."
And, following thus the Lady, she
Turn'd oft to gaze and smile on me,
Saying how like I was to one
She knew on earth, more heavenly none.
"And, when you laugh, I see," she sigh'd,
"How much he loved her! Many a bride
"In heaven such countersemblance bears,
"Through what Love deem'd rejected prayers."
And, lo, within the crystal drawn,
I laugh'd the laugh of Mrs. Vaughan!

Suffering a momentary lapse
Earthwards, I thus inquired: "Perhaps
"The open glory of the Lord
"Will show, as promised in His Word?"
And she replied, "What may you mean?
"Nought else in heaven was ever seen!"
She would have shewn me more, but then
One of a troop of glorious men,
From some great work, towards her came,
And she so smiled 'twas such a flame,
Aaron's twelve jewels seem'd to mix
With the lights of the Seven Candlesticks.

VII.

LADY CLITHEROE TO MRS. GRAHAM.

MY dearest Aunt, the Wedding-day,
But for Jane's loss, and you away,
Was all a Bride from heaven could beg!
Skies bluer than the sparrow's egg,
And clearer than the cuckoo's call;
And such a sun, the flowers all
With double ardour seem'd to blow!
The very daisies were a show,
Expanded with uncommon pride,
Like little pictures of the Bride.
Your Great-Niece and your Grandson were
Perfection of a pretty pair.
How well Honoria's girls turn out,
Although they never go about!

Dear me, what trouble and expense
It took to teach mine confidence!
Hers greet mankind as I've heard say
That wild things do, where beasts of prey
Were never known, nor any men
Have met their fearless eyes till then.
Their grave, inquiring trust to find
All creatures of their simple kind
Quite disconcerts bold coxcombry,
And makes less perfect candour shy.
  Bred to their parents' courtly style,
The lure of an admiring smile
Is lost; and flatteries less sincere
And authorised than theirs, they hear
Unmoved, like solemn little queens,
Nor even wonder what it means.
Our Bride has never been from home!
So, when John carries her to Rome,
Thenceforward she will have a dim
Idea that Rome is part of him.
Of course he knows that! Folks may scoff,
But how your home-kept girls go off!

Yes, Hymen hastens to unband
The waist that ne'er felt waltzer's hand!
At last I see my Sister's right,
And I've told Maud this very night,
(But, oh, my daughters have such wills!)
To knit, and only dance quadrilles.
You say Fred never writes to you
Frankly, as once he used to do,
About himself; and you complain
He shared with none his grief for Jane.
Ah, dear Aunt, that's the way with men.
I've often noticed it! But then
It all comes of the foolish fright
They're in at the word, hypocrite.
Sooner than inconsistent seem
I've heard a young male saint blaspheme!
And though, when first in love, sometimes
They rave in letters, talk, and rhymes,
When once they find, as find they must,
How hard 'tis to be hourly just

To those they love, they are dumb for shame,
Where we, you see, rave on the same.
  Honoria, to whose heart alone
He seems to open all his own,
At times has tears in her kind eyes,
After their private colloquies.
I should have fancied, but for this,
That time had heal'd that grief of his.
Frederick's was not a lively way
Ever, but ne'er more nearly gay.
  The Vaughans have had his children here
The best part of the mourning-year,
And he comes with them when he can.
I think I never knew a man
So favor'd here! Howbeit he moves
My spleen by his impartial loves.
His pleasure has some inner spring
Depending not on anything.
Petting our Polly, none e'er smiled
More fondly on his favourite child;
Yet, playing with his own, it is
With smiles as if it were not his.

He means to go again to sea,
Now that the wedding's over. "He
"And his two Babies can't be nurs'd
"And fed for ever at the Hurst,"
He says to Vaughan, (who all his life,
Has loved the lovers of his Wife,)
And, having been so used to roam,
He finds that, by himself, at home
There's scarcely space to breathe. Then, soon
After the finish'd honeymoon,
He gives to Emily and John
The little ones to practise on;
And Major-domo, Mrs. Rouse,
A dear old soul from Ashfield House,
Will scold the housemaids and the cook,
Till Emily has learn'd to look
A little braver than a lamb
Surprised by dogs without its dam!
Do, dear Aunt, use your influence,
And try to teach some plain good sense
To Mary. 'Tis not yet too late
To make her change her chosen state

Of single foolishness. In truth,
I fancy that, with fading youth,
Her will now wavers. Yesterday,
Though, till the Bride was gone away,
Joy shone from Mary's loving heart,
I found her afterwards apart,
Hysterically sobbing. I
Knew much too well to ask her why.
This marrying of Nieces daunts
The bravest souls of maiden Aunts.
Though Sister's children often blend
Sweetly the bonds of child and friend,
They are but reeds to rest upon.
When Emily comes back with John
Her right to go downstairs before
Aunt Mary will but be the more
Observed if kindly waived, and how
Shall these be as they were, when now
Niece has her John, and Aunt the sense
Of her superior innocence?
Somehow, all loves, however fond,
Prove lieges of the nuptial bond,

And she who dares at this to scoff,
Finds all the rest in time drop off;
While marriage, like a mushroom-ring,
Spreads its sure circle every Spring.

She twice refused George Vane, you know;
Yet, when he died three years ago
In the Indian war, she put on grey,
And wears no colours to this day.
And she it is who charges *me*,
Dear Aunt, with "inconsistency!"

You heard we lost poor Mr. Vere.
Mary's pet Parson now is here,
Who preaches morn and evening too,
On worldliness, towards my pew,
I daren't think "nonsense!" though I've tried,
Because the Devil's on his side.
Now dear Papa goes murmuring on,
"Love one another!" like Saint John.
What happens if we disobey
He will not positively say;
Which leaves, you see, the advantage quite
With him who puts us in a fright.

VIII.

MARY CHURCHILL TO THE DEAN.

CHARLES does me honour, but 'twere vain
To reconsider now again,
And so to doubt the clear-shewn truth
I sought for, and received, when youth,
Being fair, and woo'd by one whose love
Was lovely, fail'd my mind to move.
God bids them by their own will go,
Who ask again the things they know!
Renouncing the dear name of Bride,
I did it not in saintly pride,
But dreading my infirmity,
And ignorance of how to be
Faithful, at once, to the heavenly life,
And the fond duties of a wife.
I narrow am and want the art
To love two things with all my heart.

Occupied singly in His search,
Who, in the Mysteries of the Church,
Returns, and calls them Clouds of Heaven,
I tread a road, straight, hard, and even;
But fear to wander all confused,
By two-fold fealty abused.
Either should I the one forget,
Or scantly pay the other's debt;
For still it seems to me we make
Love vain by adding "for His sake;"
Nay, at the very thought my breast
Is fill'd with anguish of unrest!
You bid me, Father, count the cost.
I have; and all that must be lost
I feel as only women can.
To make the heart's wealth of some man,
And through the untender world to move,
Wrapt safe in his superior love,
How sweet! Sweet the wife's daily round
Of duties, and their narrow bound,
So plain, that to transgress were hard,
Yet full of tangible reward!

Her charities, not marr'd like mine,
With chance of thwarting laws divine,
The world's regards and just delight
In one so clearly, kindly right,
How sweet! Dear Father, I endure,
Not without sharp regret, be sure,
To give up such glad certainty,
For what, perhaps, may never be.
For nothing of my state I know,
But that t'ward heaven I seem to go
As one who fondly landward hies
Along a deck that faster flies.
With every year, meantime, some grace
Of earthly happiness gives place
To humbling ills, the very charms
Of youth being counted henceforth harms.
To blush already seems absurd;
Nor know I whether I should herd
With girls or wives, or sadliest balk
Maids' merriment or matrons' talk;
Nor are men's courtesies her dues
Who is not good for show nor use.

But strait's the gate of life! O'er late,
Besides, 'twere now to change my fate:
For flowers and fruit of love to form,
It must be Spring as well as warm.
The world's delight my soul dejects,
Revenging all my disrespects,
Of old, with incapacity
To chime with even its harmless glee,
Which sounds, from fields beyond my range,
Like fairies' music, thin and strange.
With something like remorse, I grant
The world has beauty which I want,
And if, instead of judging it,
I at its Council chance to sit,
Or at its gay and order'd Feast,
My place seems lower than the least.
The conscience of the life to be
Smites me with inefficiency,
And makes me all unfit to bless
With comfortable earthliness
The rest-desiring brain of man.
Finally, then, I fix my plan

To dwell with Him that dwells apart
In the highest heaven and lowliest heart;
Nor will I, to my utter loss,
Look to pluck roses from the Cross.
As for the good of human love,
'Twere countercheck almost enough,
To think that one must die before
The other; and perhaps 'tis more
In love's last interest to do
Nought the least contrary thereto,
Than to be blest, and be unjust,
Or suffer injustice; as they must,
Without a miracle, whose pact
Compels to mutual life and act,
Whether love shines, or darkness sleeps
Cold on the spirit's changeful deeps.
Enough if, to my earthly share,
Fall gleams which keep me from despair.
Happy the good we here discern;
More happy that for which we yearn;
But measurelessly happy above
All else is that we guess not of!

IX.

LADY CLITHEROE TO EMILY GRAHAM.

MY dearest Niece, I'm charm'd to hear
The scenery's fine at Windermere,
And glad a six-weeks' wife defers
In the least to wisdom not yet hers.
But, Child, I've no advice to give!
Rules only make it hard to live.
And where's the good of having been
Well-taught from seven to seventeen,
If, married, you may not leave off,
And say, at last, "I'm good enough!"
Neglect your mind. Folly's to that
What to the figure is the fat.
We know, however wise by rule,
Woman is still by nature fool;

And men have sense to like her all
The more when she is natural.
'Tis true that, if we choose, we can
Mock to a miracle the man;
But iron in the fire red hot,
Though 'tis the heat, the fire 'tis not;
And who, for such a gain, would pledge
The babe's and woman's privilege,
No duties and a thousand rights?
Besides, defect love's flow incites,
As water in a well will run,
Only the while 'tis drawn upon.
"Point de culte sans mystère" you say
"And what if that should die away!"
Child, never fear that either could
Pull from Saint Cupid's face the hood.
The follies natural to each
Surpass the other's moral reach.
Just think how men, with sword and gun,
Will really fight, and never run;
And all is jest; for they'd have died,
For sixpence more, on the other side

A woman's heart must ever warm
At such odd ways ; and, so, we charm
By strangeness which, the more they mark,
The more men get into the dark.
The marvel, by familiar life,
Grows, and attaches to the wife
By whom it grows. Thus, silly Girl,
To John you'll always be the pearl
In the oyster of the universe ;
And, though in time he'll treat you worse,
He'll love you more, you need not doubt,
And never, never find you out !
Not that I'd have you e'er let fall
A decent ceremonial :
For John's sake, since 'tis own'd by men
They never were so blest as when
They paid us their attentions, 'twill
Be wise to make him pay them still.
My Dear, I know that dreadful thought
That you've been kinder than you ought.
It almost makes you hate him ! Yet
'Tis wonderful how men forget,

And how a merciful Providence
Deprives our husbands of all sense
Of kindness past, and makes them deem
We always were what now we seem!
For their own good we must, you know,
However plain the way we go,
Still make it strange with stratagem;
And instinct tells us that, to them,
'Tis always right to bate their price.
Yet I must say they're rather nice,
And, oh, so easily taken in
To cheat them almost seems a sin!
If a wife cries, a man thinks this
Really shows something is amiss!
And, Dearest, 'twould be most unfair
To John your feelings to compare
With his, or any man's; for she
Who loves at all loves always; he,
Who loves far more, loves yet by fits,
And, when the wayward wind remits
To blow, his feelings faint and drop,
Like forge-flames when the bellows stop.

Such things don't trouble you at all,
When once you know they are natural.
And, as for getting old, my Dear,
If you're but prudent, year by year,
He'll find some far-fetch'd cause the more
To think you fairer than before.
My Birthday (for an instance take),
As I was looking in the Lake,
Studious if black would best subdue
The red in my nose, or black with blue,
Your Uncle, in his loftiest mode,
Assured me that my face ne'er glow'd
With such a handsome health! And yet,
As you, I doubt not, know, my Pet,
Albeit we never quarrel, we
Maltreat each other constantly!
And, by the way, this is a fact
On which, in season, you may act:
Where two are all 'tis hard for half
To fight: he, when I scold, will laugh
Till I laugh with him: if 'tis I
Am scolded, I have but to cry.

Talk breaks no bones, if only one
Waits till the other has quite done.
My love to John; and, pray, my Dear,
Don't let me see you for a year,
Unless, indeed, ere then you've learn'd
That Beauties wed are blossoms turn'd
To unripe codlings, meant to dwell
In modest shadow hidden well,
Till this green stage again permute
To glow of flowers with good of fruit.
I will not have my patience tried
By your absurd new-married pride,
That scorns the world's slow-gather'd sense,
Ties up the hands of Providence,
Rules babes, before there's hope of one,
Better than mothers e'er have done,
And, for your poor particular,
Neglects delights and graces far
Beyond your crude and thin conceit.
Age has romance almost as sweet,
And much more generous than this
Of yours and John's. With all the bliss

Of the evenings when you coo'd with him
And upset home for your sole whim,
You might have envied, were you wise,
The tears within your Mother's eyes,
Which, I dare say, you did not see.
But let that pass! Yours yet will be,
I hope, as happy, kind, and true
As lives which now seem void to you.
Have you not seen shop-painters paste
Their gold in sheets, then rub to waste
Full half, and, lo, you read the name?
Well, Time, my Dear, does much the same
With this unmeaning glare of love.
But, though you yet may much improve,
In marriage, be it still confess'd,
There's little merit at the best.
Some half-a-dozen lives, indeed,
Which else would not have had the need,
Get food and nurture, as the price
Of antedated Paradise;
But what's that to the varied want
Succour'd by Mary, your dear Aunt,

Who put the bridal crown thrice by,
For that of which virginity,
So used, has hope? She sends her love,
As usual with a proof thereof—
Papa's Discourse, which you, no doubt,
Heard none of, neatly copied out
Whilst we were dancing. All are well.
Adieu, for there's the Luncheon Bell.

X.

THE WEDDING SERMON.

I.

THAT good, which does itself not know,
Scarce is. Good families are so,
Less through their coming of good kind,
Than having borne it well in mind;
And this does all from honour bar,
The ignorance of that they are.
In the heart of the world, alas, for want
Of knowing aright what light souls taunt
As lightness, but which God has made
Such that for even its feeble shade,
Evoked by falsely fair ostents
And soiling of its sacraments,
Great Statesmen, Poets, Warriors, Kings
Have honour and all other things
Gladly accounted nothing, what
Fell fires of Tophet burn forgot!

II.

The truths of love are like the sea
For clearness and for mystery.
Of that sweet love which, startling, wakes
Maiden and Youth, and mostly breaks
The word of promise to the ear,
But keeps it, after many a year,
To the full spirit, how shall I speak?
My memory with age is weak,
And I for hopes do oft suspect
The things I seem to recollect.
Yet who but must remember well
'Twas this made heaven intelligible
As motive, though 'twas small the power
The heart might have, for even an hour,
To hold possession of the height
Of nameless pathos and delight!

III.

In Godhead rise, thither flow back
All loves, which, as they keep or lack

The appointed course and bound assign'd,
Are virtue or sin. Love's every kind,
Lofty or low, of spirit or sense,
Desire is, or Benevolence.
He who is fairer, better, higher
Than all His works, claims all desire,
And in His Poor, His Proxies, asks
Our whole benevolence: He tasks,
Howbeit, His People by their powers;
And if, my Children, you, for hours
Daily, untortur'd in the heart,
Can worship, and time's other part
Give, without rough recoils of sense,
To the claims ingrate of indigence,
Happy are you, and fit to be
Wrought to rare heights of sanctity,
For the humble to grow humbler at.
But if the flying spirit falls flat,
After the modest spell of prayer
That saves the day from sin and care,
And the upward eye a void descries,
And praises seem hypocrisies,

And, in the soul, o'erstrain'd for grace,
A godless anguish grows apace;
Or, if impartial charity
Seems, in the act, a sordid lie,
Do not infer you cannot please
God, or that He his promises
Postpones, but be content to love
No more than He accounts enough,
Leaving Christ's right and left in heaven
To be to them unenvied given
For whom it is prepared. Let us,
Who are but babes in Christ, think thus,
(Admiring them whose skill it suits
To adore, unscath'd, God's attributes,)
That all ambition bears a curse,
And none, if height metes error, worse
Than his who sets his hope on more
Godliness than God made him for.
At least, leave distant worlds alone,
Till you are native to your own;
Account them poor enough who want
Any good thing which you can grant;

And fathom well the depths of life
In loves of Husband and of Wife,
Child, Mother, Father; simple keys
To all the Christian mysteries.

IV.

The love of marriage claims, above
All special kinds, the name of love,
As being, though not so saintly high
As what seeks Heaven with single eye,
Sole perfect. Equal and entire,
Therein Benevolence, Desire,
Elsewhere ill-join'd or found apart,
Become the pulses of one heart,
Which now contracts, and now dilates,
And, each to the height exalting, mates
Self-seeking to self-sacrifice.
Nay, in its subtle paradise
(When purest) this one love unites
All modes of these two opposites,
All balanced in accord so rich
Who may determine which is which?

Chiefly God's love does in it live,
And nowhere else so sensitive;
For each is all that the other's eye,
In the vague vast of Deity,
Can comprehend and so contain
As still to touch and ne'er to strain
The fragile nerves of joy. And, then,
'Tis such a wise goodwill to men
And politic economy
As in a prosperous State we see,
Where every plot of common land
Is yielded to some private hand
To fence about and cultivate.
Does narrowness its praise abate?
Nay, the infinite of man is found
But in the beating of its bound,
And, if a brook its banks o'erpass,
'Tis not a sea, but a morass.

v.

Without God's Word, what wildest guess
Of Love's most innocent loftiness

Had dared to dream of its own height!
But that bold sun-gleam quench'd the night,
Shewing Heaven's happiest symbol, where
The torch of Psyche flash'd despair;
Proclaiming love, even in divine
Realms, to be male and feminine;
Foretelling, in the Song of Songs,
Which time makes clear as it prolongs,
Christ's nuptials with the Church, (far more,
My Children, than a metaphor,)
And aye by names of Bride and Wife,
Husband and Bridegroom, heaven's own life
Picturing, so proving theirs to be
The earth's unearthliest sanctity.
  Herein I speak of heights, and heights
Are hardly scaled. The best delights
Of even this homeliest passion, are
In the most perfect souls so rare,
That they who feel them are as men
Sailing the Southern ocean, when,
At midnight, they look up, and eye
The starry Cross, and a strange sky

Of brighter stars; and sad thoughts come
To each how far he is from home.
  The Truth, when most it thwarts our wills
In show, then most in fact fulfils.
Love's subtlest nuptial sweetness see
In the doctrine of virginity!
For what's the virgin's special crown,
But that which Love in faith lays down,
Transmuted, without shade of loss,
By the charm'd contact of the Cross,
To what love nuptial oft makes vow,
With sighs, to be, but sees not how?
Could lovers, at their dear wish, blend,
'Twould kill the bliss which they intend;
For joy is love's obedience
Against the law of natural sense;
And those perpetual yearnings sweet
Of lives which dream that they can meet
Are given that lovers never may
Be without sacrifice to lay
On the high altar of true love,
With tears of vestal joy. To move

Frantic, like comets to our bliss,
Forgetting that we always miss,
And so to seek and fly the sun,
By turns, around which love should run,
Perverts the ineffable delight
Of service guerdon'd with full sight
And pathos of a hopeless want,
To an unreal victory's vaunt,
And plaint of an unreal defeat,
Languor and passion. Misconceit
May also be of the virgin will,
Whose goal is nuptial blessing still,
And whose true being doth subsist
There where the outward forms are miss'd,
In those who learn and keep the sense
Divine of "due benevolence,"
Seeking for aye, without alloy
Of selfish thought, another's joy,
And finding, in degrees unknown,
That which in act they shunn'd, their own.
For all delights of earthly love
Are shadows of the heavens, and move

As other shadows do: they flee
From him that follows them; but he
Who flies, for ever finds his feet
Embraced by their pursuings sweet.

VI.

Yet each must learn that Christ's Cross is
Safety, ere he can find it bliss.
The powers that Nature's powers can stem
Must come to us, not we to them.
The heavenward soul no measure keeps,
But, lark-like, soars by wayward leaps;
And highest achievements here befall,
As elsewhere, expectations small.
Then, even in love humane, do I
Not counsel aspirations high,
So much as sweet and regular
Use of the good in which we are.
As when a man along the ways
Walks, and a sudden music plays,
His step unchanged, he steps in time,
So let your Grace with Nature chime.

Her primal forces burst, like straws,
The bonds of uncongenial laws,
And those who conquer her are they
Who comprehend her and obey;
Which let your one ambition be;
For pride of soaring sanctity
Revolts to hell, and that which needs
The world's high places, and succeeds,
Suffers as if a level shock'd
The upstepping foot. Be ye not mock'd:
Right life is glad as well as just,
And, rooted strong in "This I must,"
It bears aloft the blossom gay
And zephyr-toss'd, of "This I may;"
Whereby the complex heavens rejoice
In fruits of uncommanded choice.
Be this your rule: seeking delight,
Esteem success the test of right;
For 'gainst God's will much may be done,
But nought enjoy'd, and pleasures none
Exist, but, like to springs of steel,
Active no longer than they feel

The checks that make them serve the soul,
They take their vigour from control.
A man need only keep but well
The Church's indispensable
First precepts, and she then allows,
Nay, more, she bids him leave, for his spouse,
Even his heavenly Father's awe,
At times, and her, his Mother's, law,
Construed in its extremer sense.
Jehovah's mild magnipotence
Smiles to behold His children play
In their own free and childish way,
And can His fullest praise descry
In the exuberant liberty
Of those who, having understood
The glory of the Central Good,
And how souls ne'er may match or merge,
But as they thitherward converge,
Take, in love's innocent gladness, part
With infantine, untroubled heart,
And faith that, straight t'wards heaven's far Spring,
Sleeps, like the swallow, on the wing.

VII.

Of wedlock's perils all the worst
By this mistake are bred and nurs'd:
Lovers, once married, deem their bond
Then perfect, scanning nought beyond
For love to do but to sustain
The spousal hour's completed gain.
But time and a right life alone
Fulfil what is that hour foreshown.
The Bridegroom and the Bride withal
Are but unwrought material
Of marriage; nay, so far is love,
Thus crown'd, from being thereto enough,
Without the long, compulsive awe
Of duty, that the bond of law
Does oftener marriage-love evoke,
Than love, which does not wear the yoke
Of legal vows, submits to be
Self-rein'd from ruinous liberty.
Lovely is love; but age well knows
'Twas law which kept the lover's vows

Inviolate through the year or years
Of worship pieced with panic fears,
When she who lay within his breast
Seem'd of all women perhaps the best,
But not the whole, of womankind,
Or love, in his yet wayward mind,
Had ghastly doubts its precious life
Was pledged for aye to the wrong wife.
  Could it be else? A youth pursues
A maid, whom chance, not he, did choose,
Till to his strange arms hurries she
In a despair of modesty;
Then, simply and without pretence
Of insight or experience,
They plight their vows. The parents say,
"We cannot speak them yea or nay;
"The thing proceedeth from the Lord!"
And wisdom still approves their word;
For God created so these two
They match as well as others do
That take more pains, and trust Him less
Who rarely fails, if ask'd, to bless

His children's helpless ignorance
And blind election of life's chance.
Verily, choice not matters much,
If but the woman's truly such,
And the young man has led the life
Without which how shall e'er the wife
Be the one woman in the world!
Love's sensitive tendrils sicken, curl'd
Round Folly's former stay; for 'tis
The doom of all unsanction'd bliss
To mock some good that, gain'd, keeps still
The taint of the rejected ill.

VIII.

Howbeit, though both were perfect, she
Of whom the maid was prophecy,
As yet lives not, and Love rebels
Against the law of any else;
And, as a steed takes blind alarm,
Disowns the rein, and hunts his harm,
So, misdespairing word and act
May now perturb the happiest pact.

The more, indeed, is love, the more
Peril to love is now in store.
Against it nothing can be done
But only this : leave ill alone !
Who tries to mend his wife succeeds
As he who knows not what he needs.
He much affronts a worth as high
As his, and that equality
Of spirits in which abide the grace
And joy of her subjected place ;
And does the still growth check and blurr
Of contraries, confusing her
Who better knows what he desires
Than he, and to that mark aspires
With perfect zeal, and a deep wit
Which nothing helps but faith in it.
So, loyally o'erlooking all
In which love's promise short may fall
Of full performance, honour that
As won, which aye love worketh at !
It is but as the pedigree
Of perfectness which is to be

That our best good can honour claim;
Yet honour to deny were shame
And robbery; for it is the mould
Wherein to beauty runs the gold
Of good intention, and the stay
That leads aloft the ivy stray
Of human sensibilities.
  Such honour, with a conduct wise
In common things, as, not to steep
The lofty mind of love in sleep
Of over much familiarness;
Not to degrade its kind caress,
As those do that can feel no more,
So give themselves to pleasures o'er;
Not to let morning-sloth destroy
The evening-flower, domestic joy;
Not by uxoriousness to chill
The warm devotion of her will
Who can but half her love confer
On him that cares for nought but her;—
These, and like obvious prudencies
Observed, he's safest that relies,

For the hope she will not always seem,
Caught, but a laurel or a stream,
On time; on her unsearchable
Love-wisdom; on their work done well,
Discreet with mutual aid; on might
Of shared affliction and delight;
On pleasures that so childish be
They're 'shamed to let the children see,
By which life keeps the valleys low
Where love does naturally grow;
On much whereof hearts have account,
Though heads forget; on babes, chief fount
Of union, and for which babes are
No less than this for them, nay far
More, for the bond of man and wife
To the very verge of future life
Strengthens, and yearns for brighter day,
While others, with their use, decay,
And, though love-nuptial purpose keeps
Of offspring, as the centre sleeps
Within the wheel, transmitting thence
Fury to the circumference,

Love's self the noblest offspring is,
And sanction of the nuptial kiss;
Lastly, on either's primal curse,
Which help and sympathy reverse
To blessings.

IX.

God, who may be well
Jealous of His chief miracle,
Bids sleep the meddling soul of man,
Through the long process of this plan,
Whereby, from his unweeting side,
The Wife's created, and the Bride,
That chance one of her strange, sweet sex
He to his glad life did annex,
Grows more and more, by day and night,
The one in the whole world opposite
Of him, and in her nature all
So suited and reciprocal
To his especial form of sense,
Affection, and intelligence,

That, whereas, in its earlier day,
The least flaw threaten'd love's decay,
No crime could now, on either's part,
Do more than make the other start,
And, full of pity, say, "It is
I, somehow I, who have done this;"
And, whereas love at first had strange
Relapses into lust of change,
It now finds (wondrous this, but true!)
The long-accustom'd only new,
And the untried common; and, whereas
An equal seeming danger was
Of likeness lacking joy and force,
Or difference reaching to divorce,
Now can the finish'd lover see
Marvel of me most far from me,
Whom without pride he may admire,
Without Narcissus' doom desire,
Serve without selfishness, and love
"Even as himself," in sense above
Niggard "as much," yea, as she is
The only part of him that's his.

x.

I do not say love's youth returns;
Love's youth which so divinely yearns!
But just esteem of present good
Shews all regret such gratitude
As if the sparrow in her nest,
Her woolly young beneath her breast,
Should these despise, and sorrow for
Her five blue eggs that are no more.
Nor say I the fruit has quite the scope
Of the flower's spiritual hope.
Love's best is service, and of this,
Howe'er devout, use dulls the bliss.
Though love is all of earth that's dear,
Its home, my Children, is not here:
The pathos of eternity
Does in its fullest pleasure sigh.
Be grateful and most glad thereof.
Parting, as 'tis, is pain enough.
If love, by joy, has learn'd to give
Praise with the nature sensitive,

At last, to God, we then possess
The end of mortal happiness,
And henceforth very well may wait
The unbarring of the golden gate
Wherethrough, already, faith can see
That apter to each wish than we
Is God, and curious to bless
Better than we devise or guess;
Not without condescending craft
To disappoint with joy, and waft
Our vessels frail, when worst He mocks
The heart with breakers and with rocks,
To happiest havens. You have heard
Your bond death-sentenced by His Word.
What, if, in heaven, the name be o'er,
Because the thing is so much more?
All are, 'tis writ, as angels there,
Nor male nor female. Each a stair
In the hierarchical ascent
Of active and recipient
Affections, what if all are both
By turn, as they themselves betroth

To adoring what is next above,
Or serving what's below their love?
  Of this we are certified, that we
Are shaped here for eternity,
So that a careless word will make
Its dint upon the form we take
For ever. If, then, years have wrought
Two strangers to become, in thought,
Will, and affection, but one man
For likeness, as none others can
Without like process, shall this tree,
The king of all the forest, be,
Alas, the only one of all
That shall not lie where it doth fall?
And this sole quenchless flame, here nurs'd
By everything, yea, when reversed,
Blazing, like torch, the brighter, wink,
Flicker, and into darkness shrink,
When all else burns, baleful or brave,
In the keen air beyond the grave,
That air love gasps for, sickening here
Out of its native atmosphere?

It cannot be. The Scriptures tell
Only what's inexpressible,
And, 'gainst each word, to make it right,
Themselves propound the opposite.
Beware; for fiends in triumph laugh
O'er him who learns the truth by half!
Beware; for God will not endure
For men to make their hope more pure
Than His good promise, or require
Another than the five-string'd lyre
Which He has vow'd again to the hands
Devout of him who understands
To tune it justly here! Beware
The Powers of Darkness and the Air,
Which make of none effect man's hope,
Bepraising heaven's etherial cope,
But covering with their cloudy cant
Its counterpoising adamant,
Which strengthens ether for the flight
Of angels, makes and measures height,
And in materiality
Exceeds our Earth's in such degree

As all else Earth exceeds? Do I
Here utter aught too dark or high?
Have you not seen a bird's beak slay
Proud Psyche, on a summer's day?
Down fluttering drop the frail wings four,
Missing the weight which made them soar.
Spirit is heavy nature's wing,
And is not rightly anything
Without its burthen, whereas this,
Wingless, at least a maggot is,
And, wing'd, is honour and delight
Increasing endlessly with height.

XI.

FELIX TO HONORIA.

DEAREST, my Love and Wife, 'tis long
Ago I closed the unfinish'd song
Which never could be finish'd; nor
Will ever Poet utter more
Of love than I did, watching well
To lure to speech the unspeakable!
"Why, having won her, do I woo?"
That final strain to the last height flew
Of written joy, which wants the smile
And voice that are indeed, the while
They last, the very things you speak,
Honoria, who mak'st music weak
With ways that say, "Shall I not be
As kind to all as Heaven to me!"

And yet, ah! twenty-fold my Bride,
Rising, this twentieth festal-tide,
From you soft sleeping, on this day
Of days, some words I long to say,
Some words superfluously sweet
Of fresh assurance, thus to greet
Your waking eyes, which never grow
Weary of telling what I know
So well, yet only well enough
To wish for further news, my Love!
  Here, in this early autumn dawn,
By windows opening on the lawn,
Where sunshine seems asleep, though bright,
And shadows yet are sharp with night;
And, further on, the wealthy wheat
Bends in a golden drowse, how sweet
To sit and cast my careless looks
Around my walls of well-read books,
Wherein is all that stands redeem'd
From time's huge wreck, all men have dream'd
Of truth, and all by poets known
Of feeling, and in weak sort shown,

And, turning to my heart again,
To find I have what makes them vain,
The thanksgiving mind, which wisdom sums,
And you, whereby it freshly comes
As on that morning, (can there be
Twenty-two years 'twixt it and me ?)
When, thrill'd with hopeful love, I rose
And came in haste to Sarum Close,
Past many a homestead slumbering white
In lonely and pathetic light,
Merely to fancy which drawn blind
Of thirteen had my Love behind,
And in her sacred neighbourhood
To feel that sweet scorn of all good
But her, which let the wise forefend
When wisdom learns to comprehend !
  Dearest, as each returning May
I see the season new and gay
With new joy and astonishment,
And Nature's infinite ostent
Of lovely flowers in wood and mead
That weet not whether any heed,

So see I, daily wondering, you,
And worship with a passion new
The Heaven that visibly allows
Its grace to go about my house,
The partial Heaven, that, though I err
And mortal am, gave all to her
Who gave herself to me. Yet I
Boldly thank Heaven, (and so defy
The beggarly soul'd humbleness
Which fears God's bounty to confess,)
That I was fashion'd with a mind
Seeming for this great gift design'd,
So naturally it moved above
All sordid contraries of love,
Strengthen'd in youth with discipline
Of light, to follow the divine
Vision, (which ever to the dark
Is such a plague as was the ark
In Ashdod, Gath, and Ekron), still
Discerning with the docile will
Which comes of full persuaded thought,
That intimacy in love is nought

Without pure reverence, whereas this,
In tearfullest banishment, is bliss.
  And so, dearest Honoria, I
Have never learn'd the weary sigh
Of those that to their love-feasts went,
Fed, and forgot the Sacrament;
And not a trifle now occurs
But sweet initiation stirs
Of new discover'd joy, and lends
To feeling change that never ends;
And duties, which the many irk,
Are made all wages and no work.
  How sing of such things, save to her,
Love's self, so love's interpreter!
How the supreme rewards confess
Which crown the austere voluptuousness
Of heart, that earns, in midst of wealth,
The appetite of want and health;
Relinquishes the pomp of life
And beauty to the pleasant Wife
At home, and does all joy despise
As out of place but in her eyes!

How praise the years and gravity
That make each favour seem to be
A lovelier weakness for her lord?
And, ah, how find the tender word
To tell aright of love that glows
The fairer for the fading rose;
Of frailty which can weight the arm
To lean with thrice its girlish charm;
Of grace which, like this autumn day,
Is not the sad one of decay,
Yet one whose pale brow pondereth
The far-off majesty of death?
How tell the crowd, whom passion rends,
That love grows mild as it ascends?
That joy's most high and distant mood
Is lost, not found in dancing blood;
Yet that kind acts and smiling eyes,
And all those fond realities
Which are love's words, in us mean more
Delight than twenty years before?
Think, Dear, how men would make their mirth
Over an Epic of the Hearth,

Its high, eventful passages
Consisting, say, of scenes like these :—
One morning, contrary to law,
Which, for the most, we held in awe,
Commanding either not to intrude
On the other's place of solitude
Or solitary mind, for fear
Of coming there when God was near,
And finding so what should be known
To Him who is merciful alone,
And views the working ferment base
Of sleeping flesh and waking grace,
Not as we view, our kindness check'd
By likeness of our own defect,
I, rashly entering her room,
Beauty's at once and Virtue's loom,
Mark'd, here, across a careless chair,
A ball-dress flung, as light as air,
And, here, beside a silken couch,
Pillows which did the pressure vouch
Of pious knees, (sweet piety !
Of goodness made and charity,

If gay looks told the heart's glad sense,
Much rather than of penitence,)
And, on the couch, an open book,
And written list—I did not look,
Yet just in her clear writing caught :—
" Habitual faults of life and thought
" Which most I need deliverance from."
I turn'd aside, and saw her come
Adown the filbert-shaded way,
Illustrious with her usual gay
Hypocrisy of perfectness,
Which made her heart, and mine no less,
So happy ! And she cried to me,
" You lose by breaking rules, you see !
" Your treat to-night is now half-gone
" Of seeing my new ball-dress on."
And, meeting so my lovely Wife,
A passing pang, to think that life
Was mortal, when I saw her laugh,
Shaped in my mind this epitaph :
" Faults had she, child of Adam's stem,
" But only Heaven knew of them."

Or thus:

Through female fraud intense,
Or the good luck of innocence,
Or both, my Wife, with whom I plan
To pass calm evenings when I can,
After the chattering girls and boys
Are gone, or the less grateful noise
Is over, of grown tongues that chime
Untruly, once upon a time
Prevail'd with me to change my mind
Of reading out how Rosalind
In Arden jested, and to go
Where people whom I ought to know,
She said, would meet that night. And I,
Who sometimes murmur'd, "I will try
"Some dish more sharply sauced than this
"Milk-soup men call domestic bliss,"
Took, as she, laughing, bade me take,
Our eldest boy's brown wide-awake
And straw box of cigars, and went
Where, like a careless parliament

Of gods olympic, six or eight
Authors and else, reputed great,
Were met in council jocular
On many things, pursuing far
Truth, only for the chase's glow,
Quick as they caught her letting go,
Or, when at fault the view-halloo,
Playing about the missing clue.
And coarse jests came ; " But gods are coarse,"
Thought I, yet not without remorse,
While memory of the gentle words,
Wife, Mother, Sister, flash'd like swords.
And so, after two hours of wit,
That left a hole where'er it hit,
I said I would not stay to sup,
Because my Wife was sitting up,
And walk'd home with a sense that I
Was no match for that company.
Smelling of smoke, which, always kind,
Honoria said she did not mind,
I sipp'd her tea, saw Baby scold
And finger at the muslin fold,

Through which he push'd his nose at last,
And choked and chuckled, feeding fast;
And, he asleep and sent upstairs,
She rang the servants in to prayers;
And after heard what men of fame
Had urged 'gainst this and that. "For shame!"
She said, but argument shew'd not.
"If I had answer'd thus," I thought,
"'Twould not have pass'd for very wise.
"But I have not her voice and eyes.
"Howe'er it be, I'm glad of home,
"Yea, very glad at heart to come,
"From clatter of those clever daws,
"Profaning love, confusing laws,
"To lean a happy head upon
"The bosom of my foolish swan."
Or thus:
For many a dreadful day,
In sea-side lodgings sick she lay,
Noteless of love, nor seem'd to hear
The sea, on one side, thundering near,

Nor, on the other, the loud Ball
Held nightly in the public hall ;
Nor vex'd they my short slumbers, though
I woke up if she breathed too low.
Thus, for three months, with terrors rife,
The pending of her precious life
I watch'd o'er ; and the danger, at last,
The kind Physician said, was past.
Howbeit, for seven harsh weeks the East
Breathed witheringly, and Spring's growth ceased ;
And so she only did not die ;
Until the bright and blighting sky
Changed into cloud, and the sick flowers
Remember'd their perfumes, and showers
Of warm, small rain refreshing flew
Before the South, and the Park grew,
In three nights, thick with green. Then she
Revived no less than flower and tree,
In the mild air, and, the fourth day,
Look'd supernaturally gay
With large, thanksgiving eyes, that shone,
The while I tied her bonnet on,

52629

So that I led her to the glass,
And bade her see how fair she was,
And how love visibly could shine.
Profuse of hers, desiring mine,
And mindful I had loved her most
When beauty seem'd a vanish'd boast,
She laugh'd. I press'd her then to me,
Nothing but soft humility;
Nor e'er enhanced she with such charms
Her acquiescence in my arms.
And, by her sweet love-weakness made
Courageous, powerful, and glad,
In the superiority
Of heavenly affection, I
Perceived that utter love is all
The same as to be rational,
And that the mind and heart of love,
Which think they cannot do enough,
Are truly the everlasting doors
Wherethrough, all unpetition'd, pours
The eternal pleasance. Wherefore we
Had innermost tranquillity,

And breathed one life with such a sense
Of friendship and of confidence,
That, recollecting the sure word :
" If two of you are in accord,
" On earth, as touching any boon
" Which ye shall ask, it shall be done
" In heaven," we ask'd that heaven's bliss
Might ne'er be any less than this ;
And, for that hour, we seem'd to have
The secret of the joy we gave.

How sing of such things, save to her,
Love's self, so love's interpreter ?
How read from such a homely page
In the ear of this unhomely age !
'Tis now as when the Prophet cried :
" The nation hast Thou multiplied,
" But Thou hast not increased the joy !"
And yet, ere wrath or rot destroy
Of England's state the ruin fair,
Oh, might I so its charm declare,
That, in new Lands, in far off years,
Delighted, he should cry that hears :

"Great is the Land that somewhat best
"Works, to the wonder of the rest!
"We, in our day, have better done
"This thing or that than any one;
"And who but, still admiring, sees
"How excellent for images
"Was Greece, for laws how wise was Rome;
"But read this Poet, and say if home
"And private love did e'er so smile
"As in that ancient English Isle!"

THE plan of the Poem, or series of Poems, of which this volume is the conclusion, involved, as it was schemed more than fourteen years ago, a final section on the subject of the hope which remains for individual love in death. It is well, perhaps, for the interests of poetry in this great and hitherto unapproached theme, that my weak voice has been hushed. I no longer have, at every step, the needful encouragement of an approval which was all that my heart valued of fame; I can no longer feel that lively pleasure in the perfection of verbal expression for its own sake, without which such perfection cannot be obtained; nor have I the aid of a criticism to which, I am bound to confess,—now the critic does not forbid the confession,—that every page is more or less indebted for such truth and grace as it may have.

When, however, I commenced this Work, I foresaw that its composition must extend over so long a period that there was much likelihood of my never being able to finish it. I provided, as far as possible, against the evils of that chance, by so planning my Poem that it should not be fragmentary in form, nor wholly incomplete in the treatment of its subject, in the event of its being terminated at any one of its several stages of publication. I trust I have so scattered, through what I have written, the germs which were to have been unfolded in the concluding Part, that every attentive reader will be able to perceive no uncertain utterance of the main foundations of the hope which is the justification of the entire work.

00052629

Digitized with financial assistance from
Government of Maharashtra
on 30 January, 2020